

2012 Annual Primary and Secondary Fine Particle (PM_{2.5}) Standards

On December 14, 2012, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) strengthened the annual primary standard to a level of 12 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) and retained the existing secondary standard at a level of 15 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. The standards were finalized by U.S. EPA on January 15, 2013 and became effective on March 18, 2013 (78 FR 3085).

Attainment of the 2012 annual primary and secondary PM_{2.5} standards is determined by evaluating the three-year average of the annual arithmetic mean PM_{2.5} concentration at each monitoring site in the area, also known as the design value, which must be less than or equal to 12.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for the primary standard and less than or equal to 15.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for the secondary standard.

On December 18, 2014, U.S. EPA announced final designations for the 2012 annual primary standard. The designations were finalized by U.S. EPA on January 15, 2015, and became effective on April 15, 2015 (80 FR 2206). In that announcement, U. S. EPA designated Clark and Floyd counties “nonattainment” based on the fact that the Jeffersonville – Walnut St. monitor located in Clark County measured a 2011 – 2013 design value above the standard. Lake and Porter counties were designated “unclassifiable” due to uncertainties with monitoring data within Chicago’s monitoring network. Due to these uncertainties, U.S. EPA was unable to determine whether air quality in the entire Chicago IL-IN area was meeting the 2012 PM_{2.5} NAAQS, or whether the area was contributing to a potential violation in Chicago’s portion of the area. All other areas of the state were classified as “unclassifiable/attainment”.

U.S. EPA also announced that it was willing to re-evaluate the status of an area based on its annual PM_{2.5} monitoring from 2012 – 2014, if a state submits complete, quality-assured, and certified air quality data before the designations become effective. U.S. EPA established a deadline of February 27, 2015, for states to provide 2014 data. Indiana submitted complete, quality-assured, and certified 2014 monitoring data to U.S. EPA on January 14, 2015, demonstrating that the Jeffersonville – Walnut St. monitor measured a 2012 – 2014 design value at or below the 2012 annual primary standard. All other PM_{2.5} monitors in Clark and Floyd counties measured 2012 – 2014 design values at or below the 2012 standard. Based on this updated monitoring data, Indiana requested that U.S. EPA reconsider the “nonattainment” designations for Clark and Floyd counties and designate both counties as “attainment”.

On April 7, 2015, U.S. EPA announced additional air quality designations for the 2012 annual primary standard. These designations also became effective on April 15, 2015 (80 FR 18535). In that announcement, U. S. EPA designated Clark and Floyd counties as “unclassifiable” due to uncertainties with monitoring data within Louisville’s monitoring network. Due to these uncertainties, U.S. EPA was unable to determine whether air quality in the entire Louisville KY-IN area was meeting the 2012 PM_{2.5} NAAQS, or whether the area was contributing to a potential violation in the Jefferson County, Kentucky portion of the area.

U.S. EPA has no plans to redesignate these areas to “attainment” in the future as there are no negative implications associated with these areas remaining designated “unclassifiable”. As such, no further state action is planned and/or required.